
3G

Action

Educator Preparation Committee

Initial Institutional Approval – Stage II: Eligibility Requirements for Vista Unified School District

Executive Summary: This agenda item presents, as part of the Initial Institutional Approval process, Vista Unified School District's responses to the Eligibility Requirements for consideration and possible approval by the Commission to move forward to Stage III of the Initial Institutional Approval process.

Recommended Action: That the Commission review the responses to the Eligibility Requirements and determine if the institution may move forward in the Initial Institutional Approval process.

Presenter: Frances Kellar, Consultant, Professional Services Division

Strategic Plan Goal

Educator Preparation and Advancement

- **Goal 1.** Education preparation programs hold candidates to high standards and adequately prepare them to support all students by using culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining practices in equitable, inclusive, and safe environments.
 - A. Set and uphold rigorous standards for educator preparation programs
 - C. Enact a rigorous accreditation process that ensures programs meet standards and are effective in preparing educators for public schools

Initial Institutional Approval – Stage II: Eligibility Requirements for Vista Unified School District

Introduction

This agenda item presents for consideration one local education agency (LEA) seeking to become a program sponsor through the Initial Institutional Approval (IIA) process. The Vista Unified School District (VUSD) seeks IIA to offer a Teacher Induction program. VUSD has submitted responses to the Eligibility Requirements and relevant Preconditions for consideration and possible approval by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission). VUSD is a TK-12 school district with nearly 18,000 students in San Diego County. With a school community that reflects multiple student groups, VUSD aims to better support the needs of all students whom the district serves by offering induction services to their new teachers.

Approval of an institution for Stage II does not permit the institution to offer an educator preparation program that leads to a credential or license. Approval in Stage II allows an institution to move forward to Stage III, in which Common Standards will be submitted for review by the Commission. In addition, although there is important information about the proposed program contained in the submission for Stage II, review of the Common Standards and applicable program Preconditions and standards will occur in subsequent stages. Please see the table on page three of this item for information on the evidence for consideration in each of the five stages of the IIA process.

Background

California law authorizes the Commission to accredit institutions to offer educator preparation programs that lead to a credential to serve as an educator in California's public schools. Among other responsibilities, Education Code section 44372(c) sets forth the Commission's responsibility to rule on the eligibility of an applicant for initial accreditation for the purpose of offering a program of educator preparation.

The Commission requires that an institution seeking to offer new educator preparation program(s) must first be approved for initial accreditation as a new program sponsor and must do so by completing the Commission's IIA process. A table detailing the five stages of the IIA process is provided on page three of this item.

Vista Unified School District

VUSD seeks Initial Institutional Approval to offer one program:

- Teacher Induction

Summaries and excerpts of VUSD's responses to the twelve [Eligibility Requirement Criteria](#), two [Initial Program Preconditions](#), and [General Precondition](#) #9: Faculty and Instructional Personnel

Participation, are provided in this item. VUSD's full response is also available on their [accreditation website](#). Criteria 1 through 9 have been reviewed by staff and a recommendation has been provided. Criteria 10, 11, and 12 have been summarized for the Commission's review and consideration. All relevant Preconditions have been reviewed by Commission staff and have been determined to be met.

Five Stages of the Initial Institutional Approval Process

Vista USD is seeking approval of Stage II in order to be eligible for Stage III as highlighted and italicized in the chart below.

IIA Process	Stage I - Prerequisites	<i>Stage II – Eligibility</i>	Stage III – Provisional Approval	Stage IV – Initial Program Approval	Stage V – Full Approval
Purpose	Ensures legal eligibility of institution in California Ensures institution understands requirements of Commission's accreditation system	<i>Ensures that institution has capacity to sponsor effective programs</i>	Ensures institution meets all Common Standards	Ensures all proposed programs meet all relevant program standards and program-specific preconditions	Program operates for 2-4 years and hosts a provisional accreditation site visit
Institutional Requirements	Must: 1. Have legal eligibility 2. Attend Accreditation 101 with institutional team	<i>Submit responses to:</i> • <i>12 Eligibility Criteria</i> • <i>Initial Program Preconditions</i> • <i>General Precondition #9</i>	Submit responses to: • Common Standards	Submit responses to: • Program-Specific Preconditions • Program Standards	Institution Must: • Collect data • Host provisional site visit
Reviewed By	Staff	<i>Staff</i>	BIR	Preconditions: Staff Program Standards: BIR	Site Visit Team & COA
Authority	Staff	<i>Commission</i>	Commission	COA	Commission
Decision	Determine Eligibility for Stage II	<i>Eligibility:</i> 1. <i>Grant</i> 2. <i>Deny</i>	Provisional Approval: 1. Grant 2. Deny	Program(s): 1. Approve 2. Deny	1. Grant Full Approval 2. Grant Full Approval & Remand to COA to Address Stipulations 3. Continue Provisional Status for 1 Year to Address Stipulations 4. Deny Approval
IIA Status*	Not Approved	<i>Not Approved</i>	Provisional Approval**	Provisional Approval***	Full Approval

*At conclusion of stage **Institutionally approved but cannot offer programs ***May begin offering approved program

Criterion 1 through 9

In accordance with the Commission's adopted process for determining eligibility for Initial Institutional Approval, Eligibility Criteria 1-9, as follows, includes a staff review and recommendation.

Criterion 1: Responsibility and Authority

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- VUSD is proposing to offer a Teacher Induction program.
- VUSD has submitted a complete organizational chart that indicates the Teacher Induction program will be housed under the Human Relations Department.
- Amy Rankin, the Coordinator of Human Relations, will be the program coordinator who will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the program.
- Amy Rankin will report to Rachel D'Ambroso, Assistant Superintendent of Human Relations. The Assistant Superintendent will be the Unit Head responsible for ongoing oversight of all educator preparation programs.
- VUSD assures that the duties related to credential recommendations will be performed only by employees of VUSD and that these individuals will take part in the Commission training related to the recommendation process.
- VUSD has identified Suzanne Shada, Credential Analyst, as the individual who will be responsible for credential recommendations.

Criterion 2: Lawful Practices

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- A non-discrimination policy for the institution's **employees** is provided in the Employee Handbook.
- A non-discrimination policy for the institution's **candidates** is provided in the program handbook, Induction Flyer, in Induction Orientation materials, and on the Induction website.

Criterion 3: Commission Assurances and Compliance

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- VUSD provided a statement of assurance signed by Rachel D'Ambroso, Assistant Superintendent of Human Relations, that states the institution:
 - a) Will comply with all preconditions,
 - b) Will submit all data reports and accreditation documents,
 - c) Will cooperate in an evaluation of the program by an external team or monitoring of the program by Commission staff,
 - d) Will participate fully in the Commission's accreditation system and submission timelines, and

- e) In the event the program closes, will offer the program and meet all adopted standards until the candidate completes, withdraws, is dropped, or is admitted to another program.

Criterion 4: Requests for Data

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- Amy Rankin, Coordinator of Human Relations is identified as the qualified officer responsible for reporting and responding to all requests for data within timeframes specified by the Commission.

Criterion 5: Grievance Process

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- VUSD has provided a grievance process which will be accessible to all candidates and applicants in the Induction Handbook and on the program's webpage.
- Candidates will be informed of the grievance process through the handbook and at the time of orientation.

Criterion 6: Communication and Information

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- VUSD's webpage will be accessible to the public without the requirement of login information.
- VUSD will include the mission, governance, administration and admission procedures on the district website, the program's website, and through all relevant program materials.
- Information will be made available through program flyers and the website.

Criterion 7: Student Records Management, Access, and Security

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- All candidates will maintain their own VUSD log in for their Google Drive/Classroom and have personal access to all program documents via Google Drive/Classroom. This documentation can be copied or downloaded to other digital locations at the candidate's discretion.
- All recommended candidates for the clear credential will receive email verification of program completion and detailed steps for completing the Commission on Teacher Credentialing online application process.
- Candidate records will be housed and maintained in the VUSD Human Relations Department.
- Records will be kept in a locked office and on a password-protected secure server.

Criterion 8: Disclosure

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- All meetings and professional development will be offered in person.
- All meetings and professional development will be at one of the district sites or the Vista City Civic Center.

Criterion 9: Veracity in all Claims and Documentation Submitted

Staff Recommendation: Aligned

- An assurance signed by Rachel D'Ambrosio, Assistant Superintendent of Human Relations, has been submitted attesting to the veracity of all statements and documentation submitted to the Commission. The letter also attests to VUSD's understanding that a lack of veracity is a cause for denial of Initial Institutional Approval.

Criterion 10, 11, and 12

In accordance with the Commission approved process for determining eligibility for Initial Institutional Approval, [Eligibility Criteria 10-12](#) include a staff summary of the institution's submission, but do not include a staff recommendation.

Criterion 10: Mission and Vision

- VUSD's Induction Vision and Goals align with California's TK-12 standards and frameworks by ensuring new teachers develop research-based instructional practices, cultural competence, and data-informed decision-making. Their Vision and Core Values state Vista USD believes *"Every student graduates from Vista Unified as a resilient, agile learner and creative problem solver who navigates the world with confidence and kindness and eagerly embraces local and global challenges."*
- VUSD aims to provide induction support to its candidates focused on:
 - Alignment with California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) to support teacher development through mentorship, reflection, and professional development.
 - Standards-based instruction that promotes differentiated instruction, assessment literacy, and classroom management aligned with California's content curriculum frameworks.
 - Equity and access that fosters inclusive, culturally responsive teaching and support initiatives like Multi Tiered Systems of Support, Universal Design for Learning, and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports to meet diverse student needs.
 - Continuous improvement that encourages professional learning, collaboration, and data-driven instruction.

Criterion 11: History of Prior Experience and Effectiveness in Educator Preparation

- VUSD was previously a Commission-approved Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA)/New Teacher Induction program provider until the 2019–2020 school year. At that

time, the Induction Coordinator left the district for another position and the role was not refilled. In 2021, the VUSD Board of Education (Board) explored alternative options for delivering the induction program and ultimately decided to withdraw the in-district program. As a result, the program was closed and the district partnered with the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) to provide their new teachers with induction services.

- For the 2023–2024 school year, the Board approved filling the Human Relations Coordinator position, in part to facilitate the return of the induction program to VUSD.
- VUSD remained committed to supporting induction candidates by continuing to provide professional development opportunities and covering induction costs for new teachers through a partnering program. Over time, the district and Board recognized that bringing the induction program back in-district would better serve students, families, and the community. The outsourced program fell short of district expectations, and the anticipated workload reduction and cost savings were minimal.
- VUSD intends to bring the induction program back to the district to better support the needs of the district demographics by providing targeted support for new teachers. In the past, the VUSD induction program successfully trained and recommended new teachers for clear credentials annually. VUSD’s Board of Education has prioritized this program and will continue to be offered at no cost for new teachers in clearing their preliminary credential.
- VUSD has posted the third-party invitation for comments on the [institution’s website](#) where the public and all constituencies can access and submit comments. No comments have been received at this time.

Criterion 12: Capacity and Resources

- As evidence of capacity and resources, VUSD has provided a copy of its most recent audited budget dated June 2023 as well as a copy of a proposed operations budget for its education unit.
- VUSD has also detailed within its submission the facility resources that will be available for its candidates. These include both Google Classroom and Canvas as learning platforms for all induction candidates.
- To ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the program, VUSD is focused on building a comprehensive operational framework. This includes developing systems for support provider recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development to support the unique needs of their new teachers. VUSD is also committed to aligning program goals with district priorities, such as equity, inclusion, and culturally responsive teaching practices, to better reflect the diversity of the student population.
- Additionally, within the submission, VUSD has identified the job responsibilities and minimum qualifications for the program personnel and instructional support. VUSD’s personnel and instructional support will consist of the following:
 - Coordinator of Human Relations
 - HR Technician
 - Induction Support Providers (Mentors)

Initial Program Preconditions

(1) Demonstration of Need:

To be granted initial program accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the program sponsor must demonstrate the need for the type of program in the service area in which it will operate or a need for educators prepared through the specific program delivery model. Proposals must include data on the number of individuals currently serving on less than full credentials, where available, in the service area of the proposed program, projected need based on a needs analysis, and affirmations from employers with their anticipated hiring need for individuals with the planned credential.

Meets Precondition: Yes

How VUSD Meets the Precondition:

VUSD notes that its student population continues to reflect a number of student groups that require its teachers to design and implement high-quality, rigorous academic instruction that meets the needs of all students whom VUSD serves. The TK-12 school district enrolls nearly 18,000 students. Current student demographics show VUSD serving a wide range of needs within the district with the following student group percentages: Hispanic (66%), English Learners (15.6%); Special Education (18.3%); Socio-Economically Disadvantaged (55%); and Housing Insecure (3.2%).

New teachers, in essence, need ongoing training and support to integrate these strategies into their classrooms effectively.

In the past, the VUSD induction program successfully trained and recommended new teachers for clear credentials annually.

Tailored Support: By creating a district-specific program, the district can tailor the induction process to the unique needs of its teachers, students, and community. This allows for a more personalized and relevant experience that aligns with district goals and priorities.

Alignment with District Vision: A customized induction program ensures that new teachers understand and align with the district's educational philosophy, culture, and expectations, helping them become effective educators who are committed to the district's values and long-term goals.

Consistent Training: Having an in-district induction program allows for consistent, district-wide training across schools, ensuring all new teachers receive the same foundational skills, tools, and resources needed to succeed.

Retention of Teachers: By providing a well-structured induction program VUSD can help reduce teacher turnover by providing new teachers with the support, mentorship, and professional development they need to feel confident and capable in their roles.

Responsive to Local Needs: VUSD's diverse demographics present unique challenges that require careful consideration and a tailored approach. A customized program ensures more effective and responsive solutions that directly address the specific concerns of the community.

Data Collection and Feedback: Running an in-district program will give VUSD the ability to collect and analyze data on teacher performance and program effectiveness, helping to continuously improve the induction process and outcomes for both teachers and students. Projected enrollment for the 2025-26 academic year is estimated to be between 90 to 100 teacher induction candidates. For the 2026-27 academic year, enrollment projections estimate between 80 to 90 teacher induction candidates.

(2) Collaboration in Program Design and Implementation:

To be granted initial program accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the program sponsor must demonstrate evidence of collaboration between institutions of higher education, employers of credentialed educators, and TK-12 practitioners in the design of the program. This evidence must include verification that the partners will share authority and responsibility for the implementation and continuous improvement of the proposed educator preparation program as negotiated in the partnership agreement.

Meets Precondition: Yes

How VUSD Meets the Precondition:

VUSD established a Teacher Induction Council that meets throughout the year to review the VUSD Teacher Induction Program Standards and ensure the program's effectiveness and alignment with these standards. The Teacher Induction Council is comprised of the program leader, unit head, district and site level leadership representatives, elementary and secondary teacher representatives, along with members from California State University at San Marcos and the San Diego County Office of Education. Additionally, VUSD has recently invited universities to participate in these meetings, fostering cross-collaboration to better support candidates both during their induction program and as they transition into full-time teaching roles.

The Teacher Induction Council brings together professional expertise from inside and outside the organization to provide targeted feedback on program development, implementation, and continuous improvement. The Coordinator of Human Relations facilitates meetings, gathering insights to inform decision-making through a systematic, collaborative, and data-driven approach grounded in best practices.

To ensure ongoing improvement, the council leverages structured feedback loops, professional expertise, and evidence-based decision-making. Mid-year and end-of-year surveys from candidates and mentors are reviewed to assess program effectiveness, make necessary adjustments, and set future goals.

In addition, VUSD will seek to re-establish its collaboration with California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) to offer graduate credit to induction candidates for their work in the program.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission consider the responses to the Eligibility Requirements and relevant Preconditions submitted by VUSD and grant eligibility.

Granting eligibility would allow VUSD to move forward to Stage III of the IIA process in which responses to the Common Standards will be submitted for review. Approval of Stage II will not authorize VUSD to offer an educator preparation program that leads to a credential or license, such as the teacher induction program.

If the Commission grants eligibility, it may identify topics that it will be looking for in Stage III.

If the Commission denies eligibility, it may identify what it sees as missing in the current submission in the event the institution decides to continue to work toward institutional approval.

Next Steps

Based on the Commission's action, staff will take appropriate next steps related to the option chosen.